

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 409

Encouraging increased involvement in service activities to assist senior citizens.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 20, 2004

Mr. BAYH (for himself, Mr. CORZINE, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BREAUX, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. CARPER, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CRAIG, and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

JULY 22, 2004

Committee discharged; considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Encouraging increased involvement in service activities to assist senior citizens.

Whereas approximately 13,000,000 individuals in the United States have serious long-term health conditions that may force them to seek assistance with daily tasks;

Whereas 56 percent of the individuals in the United States with serious long-term health conditions are age 65 or older;

Whereas the percentage of the population over the age of 65 is expected to rise from 13 percent in 2004 to 20 percent in 2020;

Whereas the number of individuals entering the workforce and the number of health care professionals with geriatric training are not keeping pace with the changing demographics;

Whereas medicaid paid for 51 percent of total long-term care spending in 2002, as compared to the 15 percent of total long-term care spending paid by medicare;

Whereas the long-term care system of the United States, funded largely with Federal and State dollars, will have difficulty supporting the coming demographic shift;

Whereas 80 percent of seniors live at home or in community-based settings;

Whereas 3,900,000 people of the United States who are over age 65 receive long-term care assistance in home and community settings;

Whereas 65 percent of seniors who need long-term care rely exclusively on friends and family, and another 30 percent rely on a combination of paid caregivers and friends or family;

Whereas 15 percent of all seniors over the age of 65 suffer from depression;

Whereas studies have suggested that 25 to 50 percent of nursing home residents are affected by depression;

Whereas approximately 1,450,000 people live in nursing homes in the United States;

Whereas by 2018 there will be 3,600,000 seniors in need of a nursing home bed, which will be an increase of more than 2,000,000 from 2004;

Whereas as many as 60 percent of nursing home residents do not have regular visitors;

Whereas older patients with significant symptoms of depression have significantly higher health care costs than seniors who are not depressed;

Whereas people who are depressed tend to be withdrawn from their community, friends, and family;

Whereas the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) Senior Corps programs currently provide seniors with the opportunity to serve their communities through the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program;

Whereas through the Senior Companion Program in particular, in the 2002 to 2003 program year, more than 17,000 low-income seniors volunteered their time assisting 61,000 frail elderly and homebound individuals who have difficulty completing daily tasks;

Whereas numerous volunteer organizations across the United States enable Americans of all ages to participate in similar activities;

Whereas Faith in Action, 1 volunteer organization, brings together 40,000 volunteers of many faiths to serve 60,000 homebound people with long-term health needs or disabilities across the country, 64 percent of whom are 65 years of age or older;

Whereas the thousands of volunteers that, through the Senior Companion Program and volunteer organizations nationwide, provide companionship and assistance to frail elderly individuals and homebound seniors, deserve to be commended for their work;

Whereas the demand for these services outstrips the number of volunteers, and organizations are seeking to enlist

more individuals in the United States in the volunteer effort;

Whereas companionship and assistance programs for seniors with long-term health needs offer many demonstrated benefits, such as: allowing frail elderly individuals to remain in their homes; enabling seniors to maintain independence for as long as possible; providing encouragement and friendship to lonely seniors; and providing relief to family caregivers;

Whereas regular visitation and assistance is the best way of assuring seniors that they have not been forgotten, and State and local recognition of regular visitation programs can call further attention to the importance of volunteering on an ongoing basis; and

Whereas a month dedicated to service for seniors and recognized across the United States will call attention to volunteer organizations serving seniors and provide a platform for recruitment efforts: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) designates September 2004 as “Service for
3 Seniors Month”;

4 (2) recognizes the need for companionship and
5 assistance with daily tasks among seniors with long-
6 term health conditions throughout the year, and en-
7 courages the people of the United States to volun-
8 teer regularly with homebound frail elderly or at a
9 nursing home or long-term care facility;

10 (3) encourages volunteer organizations that
11 offer companionship and assistance to seniors to in-

1 corporate “Service for Seniors Month” in their re-
2 cruitment efforts;

3 (4) encourages individuals in the United States
4 to volunteer in these service organizations in order
5 to give back to a generation that sacrificed so much;
6 and

7 (5) requests that the President issue a procla-
8 mation calling on the people of the United States
9 and interested groups to observe “Service for Sen-
10 iors Month” with appropriate ceremonies and activi-
11 ties that promote awareness of, and volunteer in-
12 volvement service for, seniors with long-term health
13 needs.

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